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Ideologies of Personhood: A Citizen Sociolinguistic Case Study of the Roman Dialect

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Abstract

The status and role of Italy's *dialetti* (dialects) in contemporary Italian society are contested among both citizens and sociolinguists, and their nuanced uses have begun to circulate (with commentary) around social media. This report adopts a citizen sociolinguistic approach (Rymes & Leone, this volume) to analyze a single controversial case about the Roman dialect via YouTube and Facebook, drawing on social media users' metacommentary and recontextualizations (Rymes, 2012) of an interview with two young women at the beach. Rather than attempting to identify static and isolated characteristics of the Roman dialect based on this interview, this report analyzes the social values and linguistic characteristics that citizen sociolinguists attribute to these young women's particular ways of speaking, acting, and being.

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During one of the hottest weeks of the year in July of 2010, an Italian journalist and a camera crew at Ostia beach (near Rome, Italy) approached a bikini-clad teenage girl for an interview, asking "Fa caldo?" ("Is it hot?"), and proceeded to do a 52-second interview with the girl (Debora, right, Figure 1) and her friend (Romina, left, Figure 1) about how one tolerates the heat at the beach (nicves1992, 2010). They told him that they keep cool and comfortable with beer and push-pops, as well as the occasional shower in order to keep from getting itchy from the salt water.

The video of the interview was broadcast on the station's news channel and quickly went viral on YouTube after having been subtitled with exaggeratedly "correct" Italian (see Figure 3). The transcript of the interview demonstrates the extent to which the subtitles contrast with Romina and Debora's spoken Italian not due to differences in dialectal expression and standard expression but simply in terms of a difference in register. The news station's description of the video's success, published on their website three days after the interview aired on television, draws attention primarily to the way that the two girls speak:

Relief against the heat? A *calippo* [push-pop], a "*bira*" [beer], and a "*doccetta se no al mare pizzica tutto*" [little shower, if not everything at the beach gets itchy]. And it's an immediate hit. Everything gets its start in one of the establishments in Ostia. SkyTG24 interviews two girls while they sunbathe. And their Roman accent immediately makes them stars. The video ends up on YouTube and in less than 48 hours it has more than 740 thousand hits¹. (SkyTg24, 2010)

¹ All translations from Italian sources are mine unless otherwise noted. Un rimedio contro il caldo? Un calippo, una "bira" e una "doccetta se no al mare pizzica tutto". Ed è subito tormentone. Tutto ha inizio in uno dei tanti stabilimenti di Ostia. SkyTG24 intervista due ragazze mentre prendono il sole.

Figure 1.

Romina and Debora at the beach.

According to the description of the video on the SkyTg24 website, the video's having gone viral is attributable in large part to the girls' Roman accents and their use of nationally recognizable Roman terminology and phonology². In the video description above, the writer uses terms and phonological representations that are known as being emblematic of the Roman accent, such as *bira*, and the subtitles in the video are so exaggerated as to be comical, using "epidermis" instead of "skin" and "kind regards" instead of "see you later," but they are wholly unnecessary in order to comprehend the video. Romina and Debora (ages 17 and 15 at the time the interview was conducted) are not speaking in a language other than Italian, but simply in an informal youth register, which is not typically used for public speaking in Italy: what could have been considered a formal televised interview was potentially made more informal by the fact that all of the participants were at the beach and that the interviewees were in their bathing suits. The exaggerated subtitles (Figure 3) are applied only to Romina and Debora's speech, and not to the journalist's, othering Romina and Debora and their way of speaking and anticipating a distance between them and SkyTg24's audience which may not actually exist (but which nevertheless acts as important social metacommentary).

Briefly after the interview aired, responses to the interview began to appear on Facebook, YouTube, and in blogs and local newspapers throughout Italy. Some responses defended the girls, some vilified them, and others merely followed what the girls had gotten up to during their fifteen minutes of fame. Several Facebook fan pages were formed, but the most popular one (with over

E il loro accento romano le trasforma subito in due star. Il video finisce su YouTube e in meno di 48 ore ha più di 740 mila visite.

² A phonological characteristic of the contemporary Roman accent is the un-doubling of the "rr" sound in the middle of a word (Pollett, 2012). The standard Italian word for "beer" is *birra* (as opposed to *bira*).

3,000 likes) was called “na bira e un calippo” (a push-pop and a beer), based on Romina and Debora’s method of staying cool at the beach. English translations of some of the comments from the initial posts on this Facebook fan page are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2.

Translation of selected consecutive comments on “na bira e un calippo” Facebook page.

User A: genius!

User B: a bira!! hey, [other user] yeah i’m from roooooome!!!

User C: These young ladies are from Urbe!

User D: girls try not to get yourselves in trouble!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

User C: Young girls, Roman and Romanesque, fresh, sincere, spontaneous, real and genuine, with a joke ready! Romans are the victims of negative remarks by people who aren’t Roman! Romans are derided, while this wouldn’t have happened to a Milanese.

User E: I’m half English and half Roman and these girls really make me laugh, because it makes me think that they’re really fools and the only career they’ll have is prostitution [sic], shoot, I can understand that they speak reeeally Roman but at least for an interview speak Italian, for fuck’s sake...!

Even on a fan page, where Facebook users must “like” a page in order to comment on it, feelings about Romina and Debora (and their language) are clearly quite mixed. It is not evident as to whether the emblematic phrase “un calippo e na bira” is intended, in this context, to represent the girls’ “Romanness,” their spontaneity, their irreverence, or as nothing more than a joke, but it appears to be quite provocative. One user finds Romina and Debora refreshing and spontaneous, commenting that everyone has it out for the Romans while the Milanese are never judged so harshly, while another user laments the girls’ use of Roman (as opposed to “Italian”) in the interview, correlating it to their likelihood of having dim career prospects.

Within days of the interview being uploaded to YouTube, the mayor of Ostia spoke out in an attempt to defend his city’s reputation, saying that like all places with a substantial influx of people for tourism, no single individual at Ostia beach can accurately represent the district as a whole. He finishes his statement by saying, “The coast isn’t characterized only by the young lowlifes in the video, ours are beaches open to everyone; but enough with this redneck image of Ostia, we have an image to defend, too” (Nota dell’Associazione Culturale Severiana, 2010³).

What is it about this video that made it so popular, generated so much discussion on- and offline, and generated so much negative commentary and concern about ‘the image’ of Ostia and of Rome? What is it that, for some (e.g. the mayor), that links Romina and Debora to notoriety? What is it that, for others (e.g. the news reporter), links them to sincerity and stardom?

³ Il litorale non si riconosce solo con le giovani coatte del video, le nostre sono spiagge aperte a tutti ma basta con questa immagine burina di Ostia, anche noi abbiamo un’immagine da difendere.

Figure 3. *Ragazze ad Ostia - di N. Veschi e A. Cavaliere (nicves1992, 7/20/2010). Transcript.*

Note: Utterances marked with (*) are not subtitled in the video.

Dialogue, original Italian

- | | | |
|----|-------------|--|
| 1 | Journalist: | Fa caldo? |
| 2 | Debora: | Si, troppo, cioè stamo a fa la colla (laughs) fa troppo |
| 3 | | caldo...ma che ci sta a ripijà? (laughs) famme quarche |
| 4 | | domanda. |
| 5 | Journalist: | Eh, te l'ho chiesto... allora, come resisti al caldo? |
| 6 | Debora: | Che ne so, vado a fa la doccetta là [points to |
| 7 | | the shower] perché al mare dopo pizzica tutto [laughs] |
| 8 | Journalist: | Fino a quando resisti? |
| 9 | Debora: | Ehm 'na oretta ma, ma neanche. Te vien da fa subito |
| 10 | | er bagno con la capoccia te pija insolazione |
| 11 | Journalist: | Hai preso da bere? |
| 12 | Debora: | Si, me sò pijà er calippo [laughs] |
| 13 | Journalist: | ((to Romina)) e tu? |
| 14 | Romina: | Io pure er calippo, poi se semo prese 'na bira |
| 15 | Journalist: | Aiaiaiai [ai la birra non va mica bene] [...non ti accorgi?] |
| 16 | Romina: | [aiaiaiai...] |
| 17 | Debora: | [era bella ghiacciata] |
| 18 | Romina: | Eh vabbé mejo de niente, dai, su. Pure al mare se |
| 19 | | deve divertì, se deve. Per forza. Arrivederci. |

Dialogue, English translation

- | | | |
|----|-------------|--|
| 1 | Journalist: | Is it hot? |
| 2 | Debora: | Yeah, super, I mean we're making glue [laughs] it's super |
| 3 | | hot...but wait are you recording us? |
| 4 | | [laughs] ask me some questions. |
| 5 | Journalist: | Uh, I asked you... so, how do you stand the heat? |
| 6 | Debora: | What do I know, I go take a little shower over there [points |
| 7 | | to the shower] because at the sea everything itches after [laughs] |
| 8 | Journalist: | How long can you resist [the heat]? |
| 9 | Debora: | Um, about an hour but, but not even. You have to put your head |
| 10 | | under the water right away, you get sunstroke. |
| 11 | Journalist: | Have you had anything to drink? |
| 12 | Debora: | Yeah, I got a push-pop [laughs] |
| 13 | Journalist: | ((to Romina)) and you? |
| 14 | Romina: | I got a push-pop, too, then I got a beer. |
| 15 | Journalist: | Aiaiaiai [ai beer is no good...] [don't you know that?] |
| 16 | Romina: | [aiaiaiai...] |
| 17 | Debora: | [it was nice and icy]* |
| 18 | Romina: | Eh whatever better than nothing, come on. You have to |
| 19 | | have fun at the beach, you have to. See you later. |

Subtitles, original Italian

- 1 Journalist: Fa caldo?*
- 2 Debora: Sì, molto. Stiamo sudando tanto, abbiamo la pelle
3 adesiva. Questo caldo è eccessivo. Stai registrando?
4 [risata] Mi ponga delle domande.
- 5 Journalist: Eh, te l'ho chiesto... allora, come resisti al caldo?*
- 6 Debora: Non saprei...mi reco a rinfrescarmi con una salutare
7 doccia altrimenti l'acqua salata mi irrita l'epidermide.
- 8 Journalist: Fino a quando resisti?*
- 9 Debora: Circa un'ora. Devi correre subito in acqua e bagnarti un
10 po' il capo. Si può rischiare un'insolazione.
- 11 Journalist: Hai preso da bere?*
- 12 Debora: Certo, un fresco ghiacciolo.
- 13 Journalist: ((to Romina)) e tu?*
- 14 Romina: Anche io un ghiacciolo, poi una birra.
- 15 Journalist: Aiaiaiai [ai la birra non va mica bene [...non ti accorgi?]*
- 16 Romina: [aiaiaiai...]*
- 17 Debora: [era bella ghiacciata]*
- 18 Romina: Malgrado il caldo ho preferito una birra. Anche perché
19 al mare bisogna essere spensierati. Cordiali saluti.

Subtitles, English translation

- 1 Journalist: Is it hot?*
- 2 Debora: Yes, very. We're sweating so much, we have adhesive skin.
3 This heat is excessive. Are you recording?
4 [laughter] Pose me some questions.
- 5 Journalist: Uh, I asked you... so, how do you stand the heat?*
- 6 Debora: I wouldn't know...I go to freshen myself up with a nice
7 shower otherwise the salt water irritates my epidermis.
- 8 Journalist: How long can you resist [the heat]?*
- 9 Debora: About an hour. You have to run into the water and get
10 your head a little wet. You risk getting substroke.
- 11 Journalist: Have you had anything to drink?*
- 12 Debora: Of course, a fresh popsicle.
- 13 Journalist: ((to Romina)) and you?*
- 14 Romina: I also had a popsicle, then a beer.
- 15 Journalist: Aiaiaiai [ai beer is no good...] [don't you know that?]*
- 16 Romina: [aiaiaiai...]*
- 17 Debora: [it was nice and icy]*
- 18 Romina: In spite of the heat I preferred a beer. Also because at
19 the sea you need to be carefree. Kind regards.

Overview of Case Study and Research Questions

In an effort to explore the elements of Romina and Debora's interview on SkyTg24 that generated the most discussion, the analysis will start with the ways users react to the girls' language use, which is the element that generates the most discussion in the preliminary analysis; the SkyTg24 webpage, the "na bira e un calippo" Facebook fan page, and the (possibly sarcastic) subtitled of their interview all revolve around the way that linguistic elements are seen as second-order indices (Silverstein, 2003) of particular types of Romanness. In addition, it is worth noting that "the Roman accent" is as recognized throughout Italy as "the New York accent" is recognized throughout the United States. As Italy's political and cultural capital, Rome is often represented in films and on television, and particular catch-phrases that are said to have originated in Rome have caught on throughout Italy (similar to the way that Joey Tribbiani's *how you doin'* or Donnie Brasco's *fuhgeddaboudit* became emblematic New Yorker-Italian expressions in the 1990s). The well-known and very recognizable regional variety of Italian spoken in and around Rome is known under several names as *dialetto romano*, *romanesco*, and *romanaccio*, all of which are mentioned in the comments section on Romina and Debora's original interview.

After Romina and Debora became the object of media (and social media) attention, some considered their unorthodox language use to be naïve, endearing, or simply amusing, but the vast majority of YouTube comments are harshly worded criticisms of the girls' (lack of) education, intelligence, and morality. Other users saw Romina and Debora's use of *romanaccio* as cause for moral panic (Moore, 2011) and as symptomatic of Rome's or Italy's cultural decline. Therefore, this study focuses on answering the following research questions:

1. How do *romanaccio*, *romanesco*, and *dialetto romano* get defined by YouTube users?
2. What/ who do users say that Romina and Debora represent as speakers of their language variety?
3. Which aspects of Romina and Debora's speech emerge as being emblematic of the Roman variety of Italian?

Dialect and Register in the Italian context

Different from the linguistic realities called dialectes in the French area or dialects in the anglophone area, the Italian *dialetti* are not variants of the national language, born out of regional differences in the use of the popular language. They are entirely autonomous linguistic formations, [and] are derivations of the various ways in which Latin was superimposed on the non-Latin spoken varieties of ancient Italy.

Tullio De Mauro (2001, p. 150), Italian linguist

Stratification in social varieties is [...] well represented in Italian: the most widespread among the social varieties is the so-called *italiano popolare*, 'popular Italian' (or 'folk Italian'), that is, the substandard variety of Italian spoken (and written) by uneducated people having dialect as the usual means of communication in everyday life.

Gaetano Berruto (1989, p. 9), Italian sociolinguist

In my opinion the difference between Italian and dialetto is that dialetto has a different pronunciation from Italian and also because dialetto is used incorrectly while Italian [is used] correctly. Dialetto is used by very many people because many [of them] didn't go to school, while it's rare that correct Italian is used, in fact very few people use it.

Roman upper primary school student⁴ (Ruffino, 2006, p. 196)

The way that I see it, every dialetto has a "good" version and a "gross" version.

YouTube user 7780argo00⁵

As the comments above make evident, the status and role of Italy's *dialetti* (dialects) in contemporary Italian society are contested among both citizen sociolinguists and trained sociolinguists. Some sociolinguistic research has argued that *dialetti* "occupy the low position in a diglossic relationship to Italian, and are mostly spoken by older, less educated people living in smaller towns and villages, particularly in the North-East and the South" (Coluzzi, 2008, p. 218), while others argue that "younger generations seem to suggest that exhibiting dialect competence does no longer mean a low social or cultural status – an aspect that is paradoxically more valued in the north than in the south of Italy, among higher educated than lower status circles" (Dal Negro & Vietti, 2011, p. 74). However, Berruto takes a more nuanced view and claims that "the position of *dialetto* in the repertoire, and the relationship among the language varieties in the repertoire, are the crucial factors in understanding the state of things" (2006, p. 122). This claim is especially relevant when researchers attempt to attach particular social values to the multiple and conflicting perspectives about *dialetto*, particularly in the case which will be discussed in this report. It is not necessary or wise to draw boundaries around *dialetto* and then to position it hierarchically in relation to other language varieties, particularly when we are exploring the its multifaceted social, cultural, and personal value.

Throughout this document, I will refer to the regional varieties spoken throughout Italy as *dialetti* (singular: *dialetto*), a term with a different social connotation than the English term "dialect" (see De Mauro, 2001) which strikes me as being if not pejorative, at least Othering in the American context. Italy's *dialetti* connote regionalism, establishment in a given place, family history, and local history, although the definition of *dialetto* varies from person to person, and is contested in both citizen sociolinguistic and traditional sociolinguistic circles.

Notwithstanding (or maybe due to) its decline in use, *dialetto* has a particular cachet in some contexts and is viewed favorably when it is used strategically by Italian-dominant speakers as a supplement to standard Italian (Coluzzi, 2008; Dal Negro & Vietti, 2011; Guerini, 2011). How the addressee perceives the speaker as being Italian-dominant is unclear, as are the contexts in which one might use these "supplementary" dialectal expressions, although many attempts have been made to categorize the social and situational dimensions of (up to sixteen types of) language use in Italy (Sanga 1985; Berruto, 1989). What seems to have resulted, however, is that the term *dialetto* remains fairly nebulous and

⁴ (data collected in mid-1990s)

⁵ Nieves1992, 2010 (p. 21 of author's YouTube data)

continues to defy technical classification among the (socio)linguistics community in Italian academia, and which somewhat ambiguously overlaps and is conflated in the popular imagination with what I refer to here as *register* (see below). Both *dialetto* and register could be examples of what Agha (2003) calls “the folk-concept of ‘accent’,” which “does not name a sound pattern as such, but a *system of contrastive social personae* stereotypically linked to contrasts of sound” (pp. 241-242, emphasis mine). It is possible, for example, that in SkyTg24’s video description cited above, the term “accent” is used to convey this idea; however, in this paper, I attempt to tease *dialetto* and register apart and treat them as different concepts.

Herein, I refer to “register” as the ways in which a speaker alters his/her tone, lexicon, syntax, and phonology for a particular speech event or addressee in a particular social context; in this way, one linguistic system can have several registers. For example, an American English repertoire includes different registers for speaking to children as opposed to to elders, with friends as opposed to strangers, with family as opposed to colleagues, or in one’s own home as opposed to in an auditorium full of scholars, with all of these registers falling under the category “American English”. The guiding theory behind this paper is that, even for speakers in language situations that have been described as diglossic (Ferguson, 1959), dilalic (Berruto, 1987, 1989), or bidialectal, *registers still form layers of linguistic repertoires*: that is to say, in standard literary Italian, in standard regional Italian, and in what is known as *dialetto*, there are registers for speaking with peers, with elders, and in formal situations or informal situations. To say that *dialetto* is spoken strictly in Situation A and that Standard Italian is spoken strictly in Situation B is misleading and is what Berruto (1989) attempts to problematize with the introduction of the concept of *dilalia*: the existence of “two separate varieties used for ordinary conversation” (p. 14) which are connected by a continuum of elements from the bidialectal repertoire. These language varieties are far from distinct (see Sanga, 1985) and are governed by speakers’ language attitudes and the social expectations of participants in a given speech act.

A citizen sociolinguistic approach (Rymes & Leone, this volume) to analyzing *dialetto* and register in contemporary Italy is much needed because, as made clear in Moore (2011), the circulating popular discourses about a given speech variety do not necessarily match up with the linguists’ descriptions (and sometimes contradict them entirely). How would a traditional sociolinguist measure, for instance, which register of *dialetto* or Standard Italian is acceptable to use in “official” situations, and which ones are not? Or what constitutes a “formal” situation, and to whom? Or who deems language practices “acceptable” or not? What other elements of an individual’s communicative repertoire (Rymes, 2010) contribute to how a particular register of a particular *dialetto* is perceived? These questions do not have generalizable answers, nor are they commonly discussed in Italian sociolinguistic literature: in an effort to begin to address some of them, this study analyzes public participation in sociolinguistic exploration regarding the Roman *dialetto*, turning not only to sociolinguists and their methods for theories about how Italians navigate their social and linguistic realities but to the emic experiences of everyday language users and situated social actors themselves as they are expressed through social media.

Historical Overview of *Dialectto* and Italian Language Politics

Foregoing a thorough explanation of the centuries-long history of *dialetti* and the invention of Standard Italian along with the nation-state, as well as the way that this history maps onto the relatively recent unification of Italy in 1861, the following historical overview serves to contextualize *dialetti* in contemporary Italian society (post-World War II) in order to trace the paths of some of the most prevalent beliefs about *dialetto*⁶ to the present citizen sociolinguistic study of *dialetto romano* (Roman dialect). Far more thorough and more critical accounts of Italy's linguistic history from the time of Dante until modern times can be found in De Mauro (1963), Tosi (2001), Lo Bianco (2005), and Bonfiglio (2013).

Throughout the early years of the twentieth century, Italian *dialetti* were met with great hostility. The Fascist government's Italianization initiative attempted to "purify" the Italian language by boycotting foreign words and prescribing the usage of only the most "Italian" (as opposed to "dialectal") aspects of the language (Tosi, 2001, p. 7). By the end of World War II, the *de facto* official status of Italian was taken for granted to such an extent that the 1947 Italian Constitution left out any clause that specified it as such (Italian Government, 1947). Despite the fact that *dialetti* survived Fascism and continued to be prevalently spoken throughout the 1950s, and despite their centuries-old literary traditions, no single formal writing system exists for any *dialetto* (Coluzzi, 2008) and no official domain (e.g., schools, government offices) recognizes written *dialetto* as being a valid form of communication. Conversely, modern standard Italian (used in both spoken and written form, for both formal and informal purposes) is based on the literary Italian of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio from the 14th century (Dal Negro & Guerini, 2011). Dante's (standard) Italian was, at one point, spoken by only 2% of the population, and was learned over time at school rather than at home; "[standard] Italian is still strongly associated with higher education and higher social status [while] the uncontrolled and dominant use of dialect in daily communication is regarded as a sign of lower education and unsuccessful Italianization" (Dal Negro & Vietti, 2011, pp. 73-74).

As Italy industrialized and urbanized in the post-war era, new forms of media (most notably, television) and increasing literacy rates (Tosi, 2001; Dal Negro, 2005) accompanied a major education reform which raised the age of compulsory schooling throughout Italy to 14. Contemporaneously, the focus of Italian linguists began to turn to the ways in which social class and school achievement were linked to language background: Tullio De Mauro's somewhat controversial *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* [Linguistic History of United Italy] (1963) sparked debate about the national language of Italy and the cultural patrimony of *dialetti*, and the general social and political unrest of the 1960s culminated in major university student protests in Italy in 1968, "changing social conventions...by creating opportunities for questioning issues of national interests across traditional boundaries... [and] desecrating the status of over-traditional institutions" (Tosi, 2001, p. 15). Literacy

⁶ While I refer to *dialetto* throughout this paper as though it exists as a bounded, clearly identifiable entity, I do not by any means believe that it exists as such. I am using it here as it has been used throughout Italian linguistic and sociolinguistic literature, as well as how I have heard it used by both those who claim to speak it and those who do not. An exhaustive description of this point is beyond the scope of this paper, but perhaps it is sufficient to say that (while both contested categories) *dialetto* is what stands in opposition to "standard Italian" on an ideological level, even if they do not operate in everyday life as being diametrically opposed.

increased exponentially among both children and adults around this time (Tosi, 2001) and in 1974, a linguistic survey was conducted in all of Italy about the ways in which citizens used language in particular domains: the results showed that over 50% of Italians reported speaking exclusively *dialetto* at home (Doxa, 1996, as cited in Ruffino, 2006). The steady increase in literacy rates and school attendance is believed to have sped up the rate at which the population “Italianized” over the course of the 1970s and 1980s (Ruffino, 2006; Dal Negro & Vietti, 2011), and may have also played a role in the population’s decreasing use of *dialetti*. Ruffino (2006) claims that

There is no doubt that school was the principal tool for linguistic unification [...] [B]eyond the official programs and even with laudable exceptions, it needs to be underlined again that the Italian school systematically imposed a linguistic model, for the most part unknown to scholars, of a markedly uniform and overtly standardized nature. At the same time a rather negative idea of dialect (and consequently of dialectal culture) was insinuated and diffused. (pp. 40-41)

Indeed, while the quote from a Roman elementary school student cited above does espouse a fairly negative evaluation of *dialetto* in respect to Italian, it is one of the least hostile data samples from mainland Italy in Ruffino’s (2006) report. Despite the fact that no official national language of Italy yet exists, “the dominant position of Italian is currently beyond dispute and its official status is taken for granted” (Guerini, 2011, p. 124). As of 2006, the percentage of people who reported speaking exclusively *dialetto* in the family had decreased to only 16% (Istat, 2006), down from 50% only thirty years prior.

To reiterate, *dialetto* retains a sort of prestige when it is deployed strategically as part of an Italian-dominant repertoire (Coluzzi, 2008; Dal Negro & Vietti, 2011; Guerini, 2011), but the days of the monolingual speaker of *dialetto* are long gone, just as the days of a highly stratified classist society are on their way out. Indeed in the linguistic reality of contemporary Italy, it is worth questioning the constructs of “*dialetto*” and of “Standard Italian” as standalone systems in the first place: various *dialetti* have always colored Dante’s literary Italian (and they continue to do so), and it seems impossible to draw a line where one begins and the other ends. Regarding register, and its particular importance for this study, it is also worth questioning the ways in which particular contexts are constructed as formal or informal or in which relationships are constructed as deferential/equal in contemporary Italy. It is not uncommon, for example, to hear shock-jocks Giuseppe Cruciani or David Parenzo (or their callers) yelling insults such as, “*Stia zitto!*,” “*Lei e’ un coglione!*” or “*Si vergogni!*”⁷, paradoxically using the deferential *Lei* (similar to the French *vous*) in order to insult each other. Likewise, it must also be possible to use the informal⁸ *tu* and other aspects of informal register, as well as dialectal features, in a way that connotes respect and deference. This is further explored in the following sections.

⁷ [You (f.)] Shut up! You (f.) are a jackass! Shame on you (f.)!

⁸ Personal communication with speakers of Italian has also suggested that *Lei* connotes distance, while *tu* connotes familiarity; the formal/informal distinction between *Lei* and *tu* does not translate into polite/rude or equal status/unequal status

Citizen Sociolinguistics and YouTube as a Research Site

Citizen sociolinguists (Rymes & Leone, this volume) who take part in Internet-based forms of participatory culture (Jenkins, Purushotma, Wiegel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009) are able to draw on their knowledge about language in order to contribute to circulating public discourses, engage with them in a meaningful and authoritative way, and often create and disseminate alternative perspectives on particular sociolinguistic phenomena. A citizen sociolinguist who, for example, publishes a YouTube video of emblematic phrases from a particular region is likely to engage with and receive comments from other residents of that same region, but is also likely to get feedback from users who are connected to that region in other ways and who have differing types of knowledge about it. A video about “the New York accent,” for example, will provoke different comments from different people, depending on their geographical, social, and/or experiential proximity to *what* (and *who*) they deem to be “New York”. Some will draw fine distinctions between Brooklyn and Queens, or between Joe Pesci’s and Jerry Seinfeld’s accents, while others will include in the definition of “New York” the entire northeastern region of the United States. As the “New York accent” (as well as any other regional variety) can be indexical (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Silverstein, 2003) of myriad concepts, there will be myriad interpretations of it by users who believe themselves capable of commenting thoughtfully and knowledgeably about what it means. The five most recent comments on a single New York “accent tag” video demonstrate the ways in which claims to knowledge about the New York accent are not limited to users from New York (Leviosaa, 2011). Knowledge about what is *not* New York is contributed alongside knowledge of what New York *is*, what it *should be*, etc.:

Figure 4.

A selection of consecutive comments on Leviosaa, 2011

Shamoy	
Rahman:	a toronto accent sounds just like a new york accent XD
Jasmine M:	You have a very slight Long Island accent. Not the typical Brooklyn or Bronx accent, but a New York accent nonetheless. PS I’m from LI too!
Emily Fu	It sounds pretty different from a Canadian accent that’s for sure. But as far as i’m concerned, that’s how all American’s speak, except for rednecks and stuff like that.
Swaggless	You sound more like you have an NJ accent to me.
JessySketch	Am from NY but from the Bronx side. To me you dont sound like you have a NY accent. NY accent to me is like the ones from the old times of NY, but not many people who live here in NY dont have a NY accent. My friend is from Texas and she said I have a accent but I think its just regular like how you speak.

No definitive answers can be culled from these comments, but then again the foundation of participatory culture in general, and of YouTube and other forms

of social media in particular, are the experiences of “consumer-citizens” as they interact with media “via a hybrid model of engagement” (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 14). The production-consumption loop keeps everything in question. What are construed as bounded categories, ‘representative’ or ‘outlier’ cases, or shibboleths in academic texts about sociolinguistics are all called into question via citizen sociolinguistic engagement on a participatory platform like YouTube.

Data Collection Methods

The data for this case study is drawn primarily from the comments section of the YouTube video of Romina and Debora’s interview (nicves1992, 2010). The data were recorded by exposing all comments on the YouTube page and then saving the web page as a document (amounting to a 262-page transcript of approximately 81,000 words). The comments on the YouTube page were first scanned manually for a general idea of their content, and as I went I kept a list of terms and concepts that appeared to repeat themselves, compiling a list of high-frequency words. I then used the “find” function in order to look up the ways in which particular high-frequency words or phrases were used, or how many times they were mentioned in the comments. Due to space and time restrictions, not all of the 4,071 YouTube comments were analyzed in detail, but based on this initial analysis, I was able to delve into the more participatory aspects of YouTube comments, interpreting citizen sociolinguistic metacommentary not simply as one-way feedback directed specifically at the contents of the video but as back-and-forth conversation-type posts that use the video as a springboard into a discussion about elements that the video does not directly address. Such conversations (about the topic of language, of Rome, or of particular aspects of the two) would be marked as “UserA in response to UserB” or “UserA: @UserB,” which is assurance that the posts I perceived to be conversation-like were in fact intended to be read as such. These posts were organized into a transcript-like format and translated into English. Some data were also selected at random, such as the definitions of *romanaccio*, *romanesco*, and *dialetto romano* shown in the following section. In the portion of the comments I analyzed, I was able to use the methods described above to focus only on the comments that made explicit reference to language ideologies (as a direct comment about Romina and Debora, as a more general comment about *dialetto*, or about Italian in general).

Supplementary data was also collected from a Facebook fan page for Romina and Debora, entitled “*na bira e un calippo*,” as well as from various articles about them written throughout July of 2010. An online commercial for Treccani (TreccaniLibreria, 2010) encyclopedias is also used as an example of the way that social media, via participatory culture, can be recontextualized and transformed (Bauman & Briggs, 1990) for purposes that radically diverge from their original meanings (Rymes, 2012).

Findings

Defining *Romanesco*, *Romanaccio*, and *Dialetto Romano*

YouTube comments for this video provide various citizen definitions and uses of the terms *romanesco*, *romanaccio*, and *dialetto romano* depending on various elements of Rome’s linguistic history as well as past and present language

practices. *Dialecto romano* would be translated into English as “Roman dialect,” which identifies this variety of Italian as being taxonomically inferior to standard Italian, but not being good or bad in itself. The suffix *-esco* is likewise a neutral descriptive suffix, such as the French *-esque*, or English *-ish*, but it gives the regional variety a name, rather than labeling it as a dialect. The suffix *-accio* (or *-accia* in the feminine form), on the other hand, has a pejorative connotation that can either add or enhance the negative aspects of a word: a *figuraccia* is a bad (first) impression, a *cagnaccia* is a mean dog, and a *parolaccia* is a curse word. Accordingly, it would seem that those who use the term *romanaccio* are referring to either a bad type of the Roman variety or to the Roman variety being bad as a whole.

The following are a small (randomly selected) sample of definitions and uses of each term drawn from the comments section of the YouTube video (original in Italian):

The Roman dialect (*il dialetto romano*)

Everyone says the same thing, “What a stupid way to talk.” Meh, it’s just the Roman dialect and it’s not stupid.

This is the ROMAN dialect, it’s not the dialect of low-class neighborhoods, or of low-lives, or the slang of the outskirts.

Don’t confuse the Roman way of speaking with the lowlife way of speaking, please... the Roman dialect is a completely different thing...

The Roman dialect is so beautiful...but like this...from two girls who are just two trashy [people]...

The Roman dialect is beautiful but these girls should study more and try to learn the Italian language, too.

If you want to hear the Roman dialect read *Trilussa* and watch the videos by Gigi Proietti...

The Roman dialect comes from the Tuscan group and has centuries of glory behind it. In using the term “the Roman dialect” (*il dialetto romano*), it seems that (a) these users are not attempting to label Rome’s regional variety as a language proper but that (b) the connotations are either neutral or positive, linking the variety to historical prestige and even to written word. In this sample, selected at random, the users’ tendencies are to defend “the Roman dialect” rather than to comment on what it indexes about the people who speak it. In fact, two of the above comments specifically state that the Roman dialect is beautiful and that Romina and Debora are the problem.

Romanesco

The real romanesco is a true and proper dialect of the “pure” Romans that I think a good part of the *romanacci* and of other Italians wouldn’t understand (including me).

Ancient romanesco more than Italian is scientifically part of the Tuscan dialect group, it’s loved by almost all of Italy for its immediacy and its friendliness...

Unfortunately, romanesco isn’t spoken by anyone anymore, maybe some old ladies in

Trastevere or Testaccio...

[The video] is NOT *romanesco*. If you want to do a comparison listen to how Alberto Sordi talked...that was *romanesco*. I've never understood why speaking Roman (*romanesco*) is synonymous with ignorance...

Romanesco, even using the same truncated words for example, doesn't have the same heavy intonation [as *romanaccio*].

I dare you to find one sentence said by these two girls that is not part of the *romanesco* dialect.

Here, *romanesco* is thought to be a language of the past, an endangered variety that exists only in classic films and among the elderly Romans who live in well-established and somewhat isolated neighborhoods in Rome (e.g.: Trastevere and Testaccio). These comments also depict *romanesco* as having only positive or neutral connotations, similar to the previous set of comments about "the Roman dialect". The only outlier in this sample is the last comment ("I dare you to find one sentence by these two girls that is not part of the *romanesco* dialect"), which frames Romina and Debora as being legitimate speakers of *romanesco*, going against both the idea that *romanesco* is not spoken by youth today and the idea that *romanesco* is reserved for those who come from Rome's historic neighborhoods. These comments also make clear that these citizen sociolinguists focus primarily on the second-order and higher-order descriptions (Silverstein, 2003) of the language use in the video, rather than on the qualitative or quantitative aspects of the language use itself; as mentioned previously, much of the metacommentary simply uses the video as a springboard.

Romanaccio

Romanaccio is the vulgar version of *romanesco*...*romanaccio* derives from *romanesco* but it has lost its musicality.

...I mean *romanaccio*, that way of speaking that has its basis in Roman, obviously, but that it is excessively lowlife-ized [*coatizzato*], let's say xD

They speak the so-called very heavy *romanaccio* with an accent that has nothing to do with the real *romanesco* dialect.

It's not dialect, guys...it's *romanaccio* which is different from *romanesco* (spoken by 700 thousand people in Lazio)...it's not enough to say "nnamo"⁹ to speak dialect...

Real *romanaccio* is spoken by real Romans, not by these [girls] who are surely from lower-class neighborhoods and therefore what they call Roman is just low-class talk, which has little to do with real Roman!

Romanaccio doesn't exist, it's offensive to say it does, they're just juvenile variables of a dialect that's in continuous evolution just like Italian is.

To say *romanaccio* is already a moral mistake, it's called Roman. This is simply the new dialect that evolves in our time whether you want it or not. As a Roman you should never say *romanaccio*, it's a sad mistake.

⁹ 'nnamo, the Roman variation of andiamo (1st person plural of "go") is an emblematic feature of Roman Italian. Personal experience tells me that the phrase "let's go" is often taken as being an emblematic feature of any given dialetto (e.g.: Rome has 'nnamo, Gubbio has *gimmo*, Naples has *jamme*, and Sicily has *amuni* or *amunnini*).

The term *romanaccio* apparently indexes several characteristics of the Roman variety, with the perspectives above claiming that *romanaccio* is (a) a degraded version of *romanesco*, (b) a way of speaking that is particular to “real Romans,” and (c) an offensive term used to describe “evolving” Roman varieties as being incorrect.

Analysis of YouTube Metacommentary

The terms that are most frequently invoked in the metacommentary to describe Romina and Debora and the way that they speak are pejorative (*coatto*, *burino*, *borgatare*¹⁰). Much of the metacommentary on the girls’ language use was characterological discourse (Agha, 2003) that leapt directly to what people perceived this type of speech to signify: the decline of Rome, ignorance, a lost generation, Italy’s status in the European Union, and other related worries and fears. That is to say, the Roman variety is one that carries meaning for many Italians because of Rome’s centrality to Italian entertainment, government, education, and national cultural heritage, but what counts as the good kind of Roman and the bad kind of Roman appears to depend on several factors, which the users often disagreed about (as demonstrated above).

The conversation below represents one example of how these beliefs might be voiced: it is a heated debate between two YouTube users who claim to be Roman about how Rome really is and whether Romina and Debora accurately represent it (original in Italian):

mavanfgulo: I don’t know, I worked in Rome for years as a consultant for the railroad and for Alitalia and I remember everyone talking like this. Just the directors to make an impression would use Italian, if not this was the norm.

milly8389: @mavanfgulo yeah sure in Rome everybody talks like this right? At the Institute of Health they talk like this? At the University they talk like this? At the Institute for Environmental Protection and Research they talk like this? At the Opera House they talk like this? At the publication headquarters of the newspapers they talk like this? Of course not! This video is just tremendously embarrassing and mortifying. As an authentic Roman I’m feeling incredibly embarrassed in front of all of Italy. And I’m tired of being classified with the loutish and ignorant stereotype just because of Rome. Rome is not this!

marinetti900: @mavanfgulo it’s so true!!! certainly here the problem isn’t the dialect, it’s the cadence, a bunch of things.... everyone speaks dialect, nobody like these two chicks, come on....

milly8389: @marinetti900 it is absolutely not true my dear! Rome is a huge city, there are people of all types and of all social and cultural extractions. As well as being full of people that aren’t even Roman. Personally, I’m disgusted by this video 1 because it’s not possible that two people who talk in this way have such a wide appeal 2 because as a Roman they don’t represent me 3 because Rome is CULTURE this is the real Rome. And these people are just a big humiliation.

marinetti900: @milly8389 calm down, you’re talking crap, at the university and at the opera house they don’t talk like this! uh thanks...the city, however, is not that, that’s the minority! rome is culture? yes, of course it is...but don’t you realize that where we live the people throw empty cigarette packs on the ground? why keep lying? because

¹⁰ *Coatto* translates roughly to “lowlife”; *burino* translates roughly to “redneck,” and *borgatare* translates roughly to “people who live in low-class neighborhoods.”

we keep working ourselves up about creating an image, when 80% of the population is like totti¹¹? here we won't ever grow as a city, thanks to these people and those who defend them!

milly8389: @marinetti900 I assure you that the intellectual circle (to separate them from the ignorant people) is absolutely not the minority. I don't know where you live and if you're from Rome and the life and you've lived. The problem is that the ugliness emerges in the beauty everywhere and in every reality. You just need a video and everyone thinks that Rome is that. Rome is not that. It's just the ugliest part. I'll give you a banal example Fabrizio Moro¹² is from the periphery and has a strong accent but speaks Italian.

milly8389: @marinetti900 it depends on who you spend time with. Sure unfortunately these people ruin the image of Rome nobody doubts that and I don't defend it at all. However there exists an ignorant Rome and an intellectual Rome. I prefer to frequent intellectual Rome. Personally I don't speak in that way and neither do the people I spend time with or my family. And I come from the periphery, too. It's a question of sensitivity toward refinement and culture. I want to vomit for these people.

In this discussion, we can see that the participants assert that there are different ways of being Roman and of *doing* being Roman, but that the only manifestation of Romanness that gains the attention of non-Romans is the pejorative one. The user milly8389 insists on pointing out that intellectual Rome is alive and well, and that not all Roman ways of speaking can be classified as "sounding ignorant". She draws a line between herself and Romina and Debora, expressing frustration and embarrassment about the prospect of being affiliated with them. Meanwhile, marinetti900 attempts to point out that it makes sense that the intellectual minority of Rome is not well represented in the media, and that the reality is that most people are just like Romina and Debora.

Geographical Representations of Romanness

The preceding conversation, as well as other YouTube metacommentary, about Romina and Debora's general demeanor and way of speaking in their TV interview links them to *la periferia* (the outskirts) of Rome rather than to the historic center. Neighborhoods in the city center, like Trastevere or Testaccio, are specifically mentioned as being the center of *romanesco* and are given as examples of how true Romans speak, as opposed to how Romina and Debora speak. In the same way that Rome and Romanness are discursively constructed in several different ways according to the speaker's identity, the addressee's identity, and the context of the discussion, maps of Rome also vary greatly in inclusiveness and divisiveness and represent a means by which geographical spaces are socially and situationally constructed. A Google search for "maps of Rome" brings up maps of the small city center, the area inside the Ring Road, the larger metropolitan area, and the entire province. Figure 5a might be associated with tourism, Figure 5b might be associated with residential neighborhoods accessible to the city center, Figure 5c might be a breakdown of voting districts for the larger metropolitan area, and Figure 5d a general map of the province of Rome. They are organized from smallest area to largest area, below.

¹¹ Francesco Totti is a Roman-born soccer player who has played for Rome's Serie A team his entire career. He is known throughout Italy as having an identifiably Roman way of speaking.

¹² Fabrizio Moro is a Roman-born singer-songwriter and television personality.

Figure 5a.
Rome's historic center.



Figure 5b.
Neighborhoods around Rome's historic center

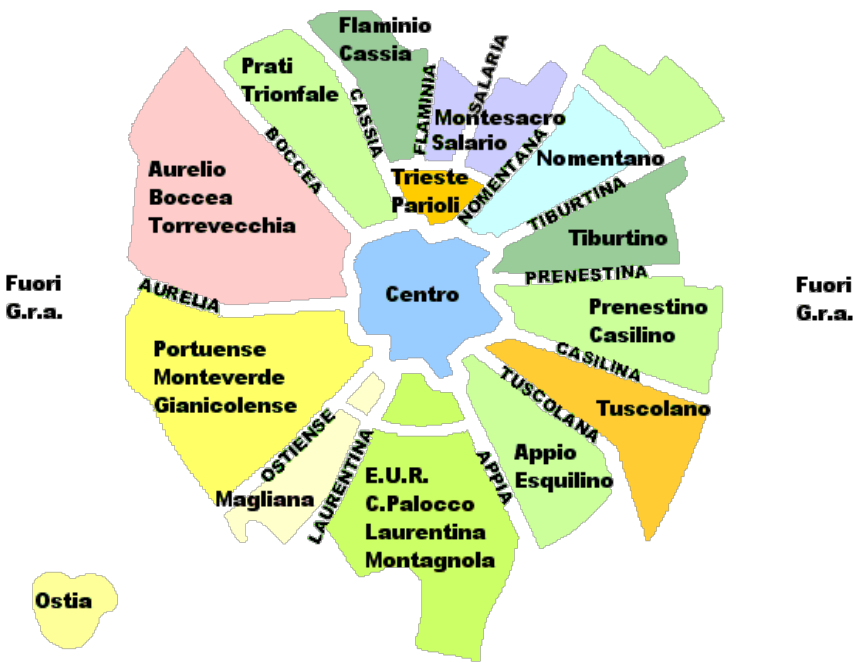


Figure 5c.
Neighborhoods of Rome bounded by the Ring Road.

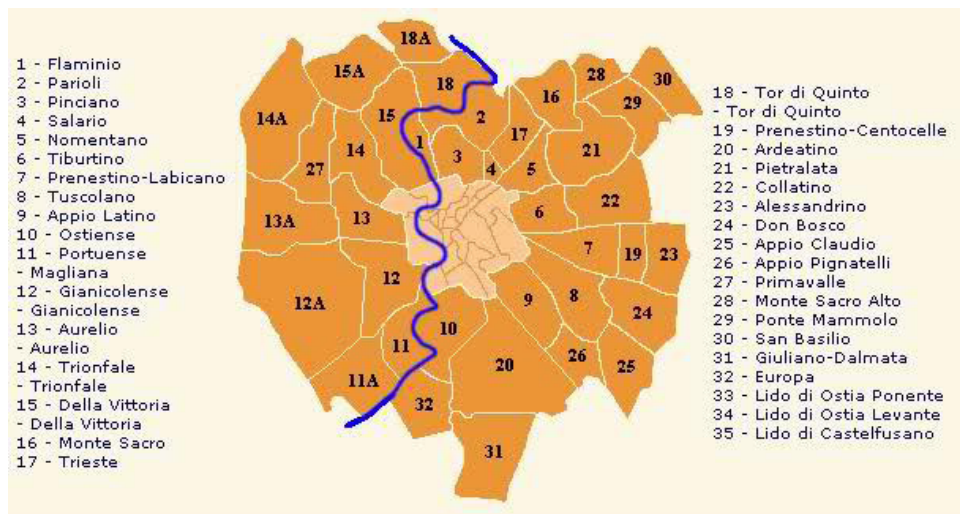
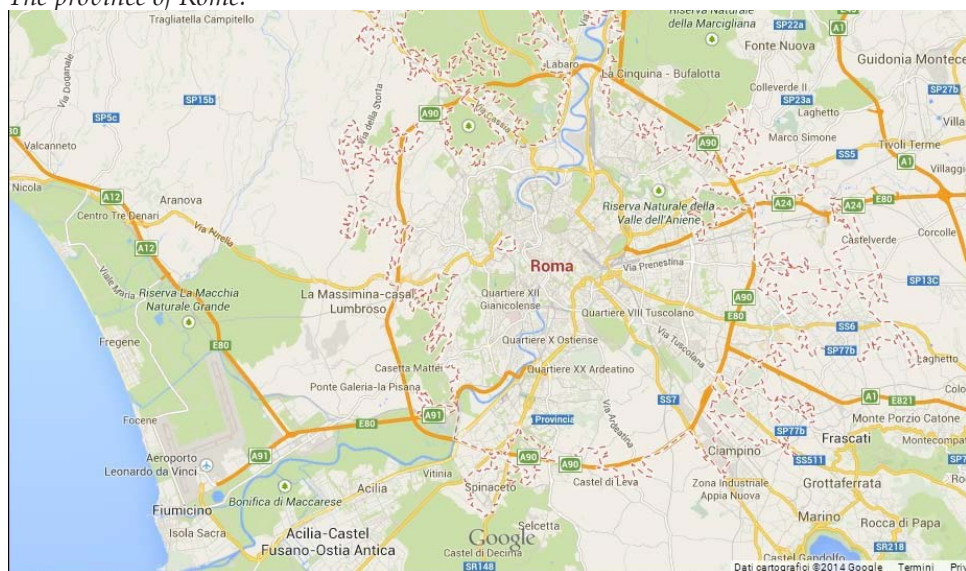


Figure 5d.
The province of Rome.



Romina and Debora were associated with the area outside of Figure 5b, which is left as blank white space between the center of Rome and Ostia beach (the small yellow spot to the left) where their interview was filmed. The neighborhoods that most YouTube commenters named as being iconic of *romanesco* are such small areas that they are not labeled on any of these maps. However, it is also impossible to know what these commenters really mean when they mention “Rome,” “the outskirts,” or “the center”: these are zones that are potentially imagined differently by each individual.

Facebook Fan Page

Much of the YouTube metacommentary on Romina and Debora's video echoes the posts on this Facebook page in that it links particular types of language use to conveying particular types of personality, nationality, belonging, etc. The video metacommentary includes many comments that are simply imitations of the way that Romina and Debora pronounce "*una birra*" ("a beer") as "*nabbira*" or "*abira*" or the fact that they say "*stamo a fa la colla*" ("we're making glue") instead of "*stiamo sudando*" ("we're sweating"). The phrase that became Romina and Debora's trademark, however, was "*er calippo e 'na bira*" ("a push-pop and a beer"). The short-lived Facebook fan page mentioned previously was made in July of 2010 with the title "*na bira e un calippo*," which had 3,292 likes in April of 2014 but had only scarce activity after the summer of 2010. This Facebook page (as the preceding one) is different from the YouTube videos because in order to participate in the discussions on the wall of the page, one would need to click "Like," subscribing to the group. One would expect that this meant that all people participating in the wall post discussions would be "supporters" of Romina and Debora, and while this was mostly true, there were still some criticisms as well, as seen in the example provided above. However, when Romina and Debora became page administrators for a day (according to information on the Facebook page), people had primarily positive things to say to them. Comments included the following (originals in Italian):

Beautiful little things!!!! I don't know you but I love you; whoever doesn't like you can go fuck themselves!

stay the way you are *colla doccetta calippo* and *bira*, you're a hit byyyyyeeee!!!!!! :-):-:-)

god, you're so hot...then with that way of talking that you have...you're wife material, both of you. byyyyyeeee

I appreciate you romiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!xD

great! Fresh, honest, cute young things!

GIRLS I APPRECIATE YOU SO MUCH, NO SERIOUSLY YOU'RE THE BEST. THEY'RE ALL JERKS THESE PEOPLE WHO CRITICIZE YOU..THEY DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. A BIG KISS. PS: *VE ADORO NA CIFRA* [emblematic Roman expression of endearment]

Since their video went viral and Romina and Debora became minor celebrities, they were also interviewed by other journalists about people's reactions to their original interview. In one interview, conducted by a journalist from a major newspaper in Rome, *Il Messaggero*, Romina and Debora speak back to the criticisms they received and defend themselves and their way of speaking, making no apologies and pointing out the probable hypocrisy that lies behind many of the most critical comments:

Romina spiega: «Noi non siamo coatte, al massimo siamo borgatate. Parliamo così, ma perché gli altri che adesso fanno tutti i precisini come parlano?». E Debora: «Io so' fatta così, so' spontanea. Quando fa caldo dico che sto a fa la colla, oppure che me stanno a schiuma' le ascelle. E allora? Pure la professoressa d'italiano, a scuola, mi dice di stare tranquilla e di parlare come mi viene. E poi, dopo che gli ho risposto, mi chiede di tradurre».

Romina explains: "We're not lowlives, at most we're from lower-class neighborhoods. We talk like this, but the others who want to be little nitpickers now, how do they talk?" And Debora: "I'm like this, I'm spontaneous. When it's hot I say that I'm making glue, or that my armpits

are foaming. And so? Even my Italian teacher, at school, tells me not to worry and to speak however it comes to me. And then, after I respond to her, she asks me to translate.”

(Desario, July 25, 2010, translation mine)

In none of the interviews that I have come across have Romina and Debora apologized for speaking the way that they do or acting the way that they do, which leads me to believe that at the foundation of the critical metacommentary throughout the YouTube video lies the implicit understanding that people who do not habitually speak standard Italian when they are in formal contexts are not accidentally slipping up and speaking *dialetto*, but rather have made the intentional *choice* to speak the way that they do. The “translating” that Debora alludes to in the comment above is evidence of this conscious ability to select from one’s repertoire the best semiotic fit for a given situation.

Recontextualizing Romina & Debora’s Speech

However, Treccani encyclopedias, in their online advertisements (TreccaniLibreria, 2010) based on “the girls from Ostia” does not appear to approach Romina and Debora’s speech from a repertoire perspective. In their commercial (Figure 6), entitled “Lowlifes at Ostia,” they capitalize on the idea that a person who speaks non-standard Italian must also not know how to spell. The theme of the commercial is two girls at the beach speaking with each other in Roman accents about how to fill in a crossword puzzle. The clue is “a refreshing beverage” — five letters. Immediately, if the viewer is familiar with Romina and Debora, the joke is clear; the answer should be “birra” (beer). One of the girls suggests exactly this, pronounced with the sound of only one “r”. The other girl counts the letters B-I-R-A on her fingers, and tells the other girl that it can’t be “bira,” since it’s only four letters. Just then, a man in a suit walks up the beach and offers them a thick encyclopedia

Figure 6.

Frame from Treccani advertisement.



and they thank him, saying it was just what they needed. Rather than opening it in order to look up the word “birra,” however, one of the girls uses it to prop up her head while she sunbathes. The punchline is “Treccani: it’s better if you open it”.

Conclusion

In summary, exploring the ways that discourses about the Roman accent or *dialetto* circulate through social media is necessarily a complex and ongoing project. However, it seems that the pride many YouTube users and social media users take in the Roman variety (be it *romanesco*, *romanaccio*, or *dialetto romano*) is reinforced through the constant negotiation of its validity with/against those who claim that it is “coarse,” “vulgar,” or otherwise illegitimate. In fact, having a platform through which one can engage thoughtfully with those who have vastly different experiences with a given *dialetto* serves not only to build up one’s pride or sense of self regarding one’s unique experiences with this language variety, but also to create a general sense of (meta)linguistic awareness. Many of these citizen sociolinguists may have once thought about accent, *dialetto*, Roman dialect, or Italian as monolithic categories, but as I have attempted to demonstrate through the analysis of citizen sociolinguistic data, “the Roman accent” is clearly constructed differently according to one’s social position and linguistic experience. YouTube and Facebook comments demonstrate how *dialetto* and Italian have been discursively constructed over time and how they continue to be perceived as monolithic categories by many. Furthermore, they demonstrate that citizen sociolinguists (including students and teachers) are capable of deconstructing these metadiscursive regimes by engaging with their historical and social foundations. By disinventing (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006) Italian and *dialetto*, or at least by breaking down the “Roman accent” monolith into *romanaccio*, *romanesco*, and *dialetto romano*, we can take a critical look at the hegemonic ideology of “standard language” and “non-standard language” and of the social systems that enable a deficit model of *dialetto* to proliferate. As Agha (2003) points out:

accents are often described as if they operated in an all-or-nothing way: people either have accents or don’t, either have certain social identities or don’t. Yet in actual interaction the recognition of speaker type by the hearer of an utterance operates relative to certain contextual prerequisites. (p. 233)

This has been demonstrated by Moore (2011) about the D4 accent, by Agha (2003) about Received Pronunciation, and by Ruffino (2006) about the concept of “*dialetto*”: what is not quite measurable with traditional sociolinguistic methods can have immense social consequences and therefore generate reams of data via social media and other non-academic back channels (see Rymes & Leone, this volume). Many speakers of the Roman variety who participate in citizen sociolinguistic inquiry and commentary seem to have thought deeply about their communicative repertoires and have a great deal of metalinguistic knowledge about their own language practices and about what others think of them. A participatory culture (Jenkins *et al.*, 2006) of sociolinguistic inquiry allows wide exposure to *dialetti*

and large-scale engagement with them, and is open to all. A study of the Roman variety of Italian as represented by a single interview with Romina and Debora at a single point in time merely scratches the surface of the ways in which open and unregulated engagement with *dialetto* could dramatically change the ways that people think about it and the ways that performances of *dialetto* are transformed and potentially recirculated into mainstream sociolinguistic exploration, political consciousness, and education.

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Appendix: Video Information

Title: Ragazze ad Ostia - di N. Veschi e A. Cavaliere [Girls at Ostia Beach - by N. Veschi and A. Cavaliere] (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJiEbXTQqos>)

Uploaded: July 20, 2010

User: nicves1992

Original: SkyTg24 (Italian news program), aired July 18, 2010

Description: domenica 18 luglio, al termine di una settimana di picchi di calore Nicola Veschi e Antonello Cavaliere di SkyTg24 vanno ad Ostia per raccontare come la gente scappa dall'afa... spiaggia affollata: famiglie, ragazzi e ragazze. Ognuno dice la sua. E qualcuno colorisce il tutto con perle rare! [Sunday, July 18, at the end of a week of blazing heat, Nicola Veschi and Antonello Cavaliere of SkyTg24 go to Ostia to tell us how people escape the humidity...the beach is crowded: families, boys and girls. Everyone has something to say. And someone enriches the description with some rare gems.]

Views: 2,164,742

Likes: 1,047

Dislikes: 379

Comments: 4,071

Shares: unknown